

REMARKS

This Amendment is submitted in reply to the Office Action mailed May 13, 2008. The Examiner's indication that claims 4-6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, is noted with appreciation. With this Amendment, claims 1-9 have been amended and claims 10 and 11 have been added. In view of the following remarks, pending claims 1-11 are in condition for allowance and reconsideration and notice to that effect are respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the Office Action, claims 1-3 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayano et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,061,821) in view of Ryan (U.S. Patent No. 2,456,650). Claim 1 has been amended to recite a method for producing fabric-reinforced capillary membranes including passing a fabric coated with a polymer solution through a precipitation tank from top to bottom without mechanical contact or exposure to mechanical stresses. Hayano et al. and Ryan do not individually or in combination suggest or teach passing a fabric through a precipitation tank without mechanical contact or exposure to mechanical stresses. Rather, both Hayano et al. and Ryan report different precipitation arrangements.

Hayano et al. disclose a method of impregnating a reinforcing material with a polymer solution and treating the impregnated reinforcing material with a coagulating liquid. As conceded by the Examiner, the hollow filament of Hayano et al. is guided through the precipitation bath on rollers instead of being guided via fluid forces, i.e. free of mechanical means. (Office Action dated May 13, 2008, Page 2). The Examiner attempts to overcome this deficiency by relying on Ryan.

Ryan discloses a method of coating filaments including passing the filaments through a precipitation bath. However, the filament to be coated is guided from the tubes 10 and 12 by rollers 14. (Col. 1, line 53 through Col. 2, line 3). Thus, even though the filament is not guided through the precipitation tank by rollers positioned in the precipitation tank, the filament is kept under suitable tension by the rollers located in the sump 26. (Col. 2, lines 19-23; FIG. 1). The filament is thus exposed to mechanical stresses while being guided through the precipitation

tank. In addition, the specification of Ryan discloses that any filament may be used as long as there is at least a minimum of tension applied to the filament. (Col. 3, lines 26-35).

By contrast, amended claim 1 recites passing a fabric through a precipitation tank without mechanical contact or exposure to mechanical stresses. Support can be found at least at paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 11. (“The invention is based on the task of developing the method for the production of fabric-reinforced capillary membranes in such a manner that the membrane surface is not exposed to any mechanical stresses in the precipitation bath.”). By using hydraulic forces to advance the fabric through the precipitation bath, an advancing device, such as rollers, is not required. The only mechanical contact in the method takes place before the fabric is coated with the polymer solution, and thus before the fabric passes through the precipitation tank. (Paragraph 5, FIG. 1). Therefore, there are no mechanical stresses acting on the fabric as it passes through the precipitation bath.

Claim 1 recites a method for producing fabric-reinforced capillary membranes including passing the fabric coated with the polymer solution through the precipitation tank from top to bottom without mechanical contact or exposure to mechanical stresses. Therefore, amended claim 1 is in condition for allowance. The rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn and claim 1 allowed. In that independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance, the rejections of claims 2, 3 and 7, which depend therefrom, should be withdrawn and claims 2, 3 and 7 allowed.

In the Office Action, claims 8 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayano et al. in view of Ryan in further view of Juliar et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,395,468). In that independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance, the rejection of claims 8 and 9, which depend therefrom, should be withdrawn and claims 8 and 9 allowed.

New Claims

New claim 10 is directed to a method of producing fabric-reinforced capillary membranes and includes the limitations of claims 1, 3 and 4. As the Examiner indicated that claim 4 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, claim 10 is in condition for allowance.

New claim 11 is directed to a method of producing fabric-reinforced capillary

membranes and includes the limitations of claims 1 and 6. As the Examiner indicated that claim 6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, claim 10 is in condition for allowance

Other Claim Amendments

Various other amendments have been made to claims 1-9 to maintain consistency throughout the claims.


Conclusion

In summary, pending claims 1-11 are now patentable for at least the reasons described above. Reconsideration and notice to that effect are respectfully requested. If there are any remaining questions, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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